

Who Blinks?

Vince or USA?

DON'T BET ON NET Switch for WWF

NEW YORK---In a story which has stunned viewers in several quarters, Vince McMahon has become embroiled in a dispute with USA Network which could result in his pulling all three World Wrestling Federation series from the nation's top rated cable web.

However, insiders close to the WWF put little stock in reports McMahon will consider shifting *Monday Night Raw*, cable's top-rated series for the week ending June 18, and two daytime hours to E! The Entertainment Channel.

"How could USA even think of letting the WWF go? I just don't understand that at all."

---Scott Kramer

Word of the USA/Titan Sports dispute broke late in the week ending June 25. The USA Network bulletin board on the Prodigy on line service contained several messages pleading with USA not to let the WWF series go.

At issue are two key elements—but advertising time Titan Sports is given to sell its own spots is the major hangup:

- ✓ The \$12,000-a-week license fee Titan is paid for WWF programming. McMahon reportedly is leveraging a potentially higher offer from E! The Entertainment Channel.

- ✓ McMahon is currently allowed two minutes of commercial time to sell inside *Monday Night Raw*. Because of the two-month surge of blockbuster ratings, published reports have McMahon now demanding an increase to five minutes.

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Steve

BEVERLY

Just at the point when you think the in-ring presentations of pro wrestling are about as uninspiring as terrycloth, here goes a reigniting of the inside wars.

In our lead story, you will read about Vince McMahon's ongoing battles with the USA Network over available advertising time in the WWF cable shows, particularly *Monday Night Raw*. Do not expect any major changes when the shouting is over (see *Analysis*, page 2).

At deadline, World Championship Wrestling had just announced a delay in the premiere of its planned new Monday night series on TNT until Sept. 4.

Even though the new date is better than the originally-announced Aug. 7, the decision to challenge *Raw* head-on earns Eric Bischoff the Jack Kevorkian Award for 1995.

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Totally discounted by industry sources are reports which speculate Fox and NBC are willing to offer big-money contracts to regain wrestling on their networks. A recently scheduled June NBC WWF special was quickly scuttled when executives determined wrestling is not compatible with NBC's programming strategy for the 1990s. Fox, which had considered wrestling as a lead-out for its NFC games on Sunday evenings, has turned thumbs down on the WWF in favor of a big-budget science fiction hour.

Where the current confusion reigns in many minds is why McMahon would consider E! The entertainment news channel, which originally began in the mid-1980s as a Los Angeles-based service called Movietime, is presently only

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seen in an estimated 29 million homes, as opposed to 63.5 million for USA. The highest-rated program to date on E! has been its daytime coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial, anchored by former ABC/CBS newscaster Kathleen Sullivan.

The \$12,000-a-week license fee results in an estimated \$625,000-a-year for Titan Sports, plus the advertising revenues are estimated at nearly \$4 million annually for the Stamford, Ct.-based company. However, an increase to five minutes of advertising for Titan would increase the gross to an estimated \$10 million a year.

In the past ten weeks, *Raw* has averaged a 3.5 rating and 5.9 per cent share of audience and three times has established its all-time high rating of 3.9. The Memorial Day edition was seen in 2.55 million homes, the most-watched episode of a weekly wrestling series in the history of cable television. The June 12 outing fell just short, attracting 2.51 million. At a time when WCW booker Ric Flair has been heavily pushing himself in a feud against Randy Savage, no TBS series has even reached a 2 rating in the past five weeks, a record string of low numbers for the SuperStation.

One correspondent for *Electronic Media* suggests E! may indeed be offering up to \$20,000 a week for the WWF package, largely in order to get *Raw*, as well as conceding the additional ad time. E! recently ponied up seven figures to gain the rerun rights to *Melrose Place* and is reportedly ready to beef up its off-network lineup in order to build its audience base.

However, further at issue is the nature of the WWF/USA deal, which *Electronic Media* reported last year would guarantee WWF programs would continue on USA through the end of 1996. Inside sources say a window in the contract would allow either party to walk away from the deal at the end of August.

Ironically, the brouhaha occurs at the point of World Championship Wrestling planning a Sept. 4 debut for a direct challenge on TNT to *Raw* in the Monday 9 p.m. (EDT) time slot. On a mid-June edition of *NewsportTalk* on the *Newsport* network, McMahon said, "I don't know why (Ted) Turner would attempt to go up against the number one show in cable television. I wish them well. The competition is good for all of us. But we're not worried."

Television ratings analyst Dr. Steve Padgett says a move to E! would be as suicidal in the WWF's battle against USA as is Turner's attempt at a head-on challenge to *Raw*. "They may hold a decent rating in the universe for E! but they would lose probably more than a million homes a week which simply don't yet have E! on their cable systems," said Padgett.

A number of on line subscribers have questioned why USA would even consider letting its top-rated weekly series depart. "How could USA even think of letting the

WWF go? I just don't understand that at all," asked Scott Kramer, a wrestling cable access show host in New York.

According to industry insiders, the economics are simple. "While *Raw* gets a huge rating, its demographics aren't exactly compatible with *Murder, She Wrote* reruns and *Silk Stalkings* on Monday nights and both of those shows do very strong ratings," said Padgett. Another factor is USA's plan to spend \$100 million on original programming between now and 1998 with the ultimate goal of having its prime time lineup resemble the conventional broadcast networks.

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Just in case you want one more take on how this new series was born, let's go back to the early June meeting in Ted Turner's office. Bischoff is sitting there, likely squirming inside because the WCW ratings are sinking faster than the Andrea Doria in 1956, but maintaining his best game show host personality in front of The Boss. The conversation (admittedly dramatized) probably went something like this.

TURNER: Ahhhhh, Eric, ahhhhhh, how come we still....ahhhhhh.....can't beat McMahon? Ahhhhhh.....you've got Hulk Hogan..... ahhhhhh.....you've got Randy Savage..... ahhhhhh.....we've spent all of this money to tape at Disney.....ahhhhhh..... what do we have to do? (NOTE: In case you are wondering, Turner has a notable speech pattern which includes "ahhhhhh" between approximately every third-to-fifth word.)

BISCHOFF: Well, Ted, I'm glad you asked that question. You see, the difference is they have a prime time show in a choice prime time slot and we don't. Being the knowledgeable television executive that I am, I know these things.

TURNER: Ahhhh....is that all?

BISCHOFF: Ted, if we can have Monday night on TBS and we have Hogan and Savage, we'll knock 'em off and deliver. It won't even take long.

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While USA Network president Kay Koplovitz has been silent on the issue, she has not been one to let her network be held hostage by any producer or syndicator. To give in to McMahon at this point on the commercial issue would be suicidal to USA in dealing with syndicators of future off-network packages and live events. One must also remember the World Wrestling Federation is rarely promoted in trade magazines advertising as one of the strong suits of the USA Network.

The further question is—while *Raw* has had its most impressive three-month ratings flurry, will the numbers revert to more routine levels in the fall when ABC's *Monday Night Football* returns. *Raw* did respectable numbers last autumn but was hurt several times when the NFL games either went into overtime or the regulation game ran long enough to bleed into portions of the west coast feed of *Raw*.

ANALYSIS

Vince McMahon made one serious television mistake in 1985, based on sheer arrogance. When he supplanted the Ole Anderson-produced NWA version of *World Championship Wrestling* on TBS in 1984, he literally had in one sweeping move, total dominance of cable television with five shows on two major cable networks. Had he maintained that position, Jim Crockett would never have been able to get a foothold on national cable which, three years later, would lead to Ted Turner's money becoming McMahon's biggest headache. None of the regional NWA groups—World Class and UWF included—which made a run at national prominence in the mid-'80s would likely have survived as long had McMahon maintained autonomy over the cable product.

Instead, after nine months on the SuperStation, McMahon made what Turner felt were unacceptable demands on the advertising time inside the WWF version of *WCW*. Published reports indicated McMahon was negotiating for control over the majority of advertising time on the Saturday night and Sunday afternoon shows. End result: Turner kicked McMahon off the SuperStation in favor of Crockett in April 1985.

This entire dispute with USA has some parallels to the scenario of ten years ago. Only this time, the stakes could be even higher because for the past year, USA has overtaken WTBS as the most-watched cable network in prime time. Even though Turner's product is not anywhere close to McMahon's in consistent popularity, Titan would be virtually conceding the lead in cable to *WCW* and cable is far more the driving force for pay-per-view buildups than are the syndicated shows of either group.

Surely, McMahon will not repeat the same mistake of 1985. The betting line: a bit of a double blink. McMahon stays on USA at the same license fee and the cable net gives up perhaps one additional minute of time, not the three Vince wants.

Steve Beverly

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TURNER: Ahhhh...all right. You've got it. Ahhhh....call my people down at TNT andahhhh....tell them to give Eric nine o' clock on Monday nights....ahhhh....let's say starting....ahhhh....August 7th.

BISCHOFF: Uh, Boss. Uh, we also need to have a way to combat that west coast feed *Raw* has. Could we repeat the show at midnight?

TURNER: Ahhhh....call my people down there and tell them to give Eric another hour at midnight. Ahhhh....you think....ahhhh....this will finally run McMahon....ahhhh....out of business?

BISCHOFF: Guaranteed, Boss!

Now for what is another possible scenario: Bischoff sat there and made the suggestion of a prime time show as yet another alibi as to why he has not engineered the massive turnaround of fortunes for *WCW* on TBS in the two years-plus he has been at the helm, not dreaming Turner would buy into it.

When Ted said go ahead, Bischoff may have privately wished he could find the nearest facilities. Frankly, if he cannot deliver with this inexplicable effort, he will be out of excuses. Already, the erosion is beginning to show on the Hulk Hogan impact on the promotion. The *Slamboree* show only drew an 0.66 per cent buy rate (despite protestations of higher figures from Turner quarters) with Hogan in the main event. The Ric Flair-Randy Savage *Great American Bash* event is forecast to barely crack an 0.5, which is virtually the same as most of the shows averaged during the late watch of Jim Herd.

Clearly, Bischoff is under the gun to get this company into not only financial balance but into ratings superiority as well, as Turner's patience is apparently slowly wearing thin. In the last quarter, the ratings on TBS have reached embarrassingly low levels, below those when Bischoff was named the replacement for Bill Watts in 1993. Never in the history of the company have wrestling shows failed to draw a 2 rating for five consecutive weeks.

Why Bischoff would believe a Monday night live series in the same time period with *Raw* when the WWF flagship show is drawing the largest audiences in history and the troika of *WCW* is at its lowest ebb is almost beyond comprehension, except for one possible reason.

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Steve Beverly

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Despite his public persona of superior confidence, Bischoff may—in fact—be out of ideas. Frankly, if you were staring a declining pay-per-view curve, the worst overall ratings for a one-month period in TBS history, exorbitant taping costs at Disney World which have not resulted in big ratings increases and a failure, other than to sign Hogan and Savage, to get the company off dead center, you'd probably grasp at anything to buy a tithe of additional time.

When the initial announcement was made of an Aug. 7 premiere date and a two-hour show, we almost laughed out loud. The entire idea of this kind of challenge had failure written all over it because it violated several classic television programming premises:

✓ **Never challenge an existing hit in its own time period unless you have a proven track record hit of your own:** NBC took a gamble in throwing *Frasier* opposite *Home Improvement* this season. It worked in dropping *HI* from the number one to the number three series for the season but *Frasier*, a top five hit last year, fell to number 18.

The TV highway, however, is littered with the debris of failed programming battles. *Mork and Mindy* never recovered from ABC tossing it in opposite *All in the Family*. A grand total of 59 series have been mowed down by *60 Minutes* through the years. WCW, on the other hand, is a ratings-tired product with no ascending curve.

✓ **Overexposure:** Not that this is not already a problem. But adding a fifth first-run hour of cable product only further dilutes the ratings potential of other WCW product.

✓ **Negative consequences of failure:** Some programming risks are worth the taking but when the odds of failure are so high that reputational disaster follows, one rarely recovers from a megabomb.

(Continued on next column)

Solie Officially RETIRES FROM MAT

ATLANTA—After 45 years of affiliation with pro wrestling, the man regarded as the epitome of mat announcers from the 1960s to the mid-1980s has called it quits.

June 26, Gordon Solie told a Tampa radio station, "At the age of 66, the grind and the travel to Atlanta every week is just getting to be too much." But behind the public story was a dispute with World Championship Wrestling over the admission of Angelo Poffo to the WCW Hall of Fame at the *Slamboree* pay-per-view event in May. Solie worked a notice until last Monday as host of *WCW Pro Wrestling*. His last telecast was Saturday.

In the radio interview, Solie discounted any reports he would consider doing shows for an independent group. "It's time to call it a day," Solie said.

Next week's July 7 edition of *Matwatch '95* will focus on Solie's career, particularly the highlights of his years as host of *Championship Wrestling from Florida* and *Georgia* (later *World Championship Wrestling*).

At least Bischoff had the good sense to move the premiere date to a week when he could have the field to himself. The week of the original announcement, we questioned on our "Critic at Large" segment on The Real Wrestling Hotline why Bischoff didn't at least premiere the show on Aug. 28, when *Raw* would be in the midst of the first of two annual pre-emptions for the U.S. Open tennis tournament. Such a move would have at least given *Head to Head* (if that turns out to be the name—ironically, the same as the title of the high school quiz show I created in Columbus, Ga., in 1981. Wonder if I get a copyright fee?) two weeks alone to at least try to get the wrestling audience hooked without having to compete with *Raw*.

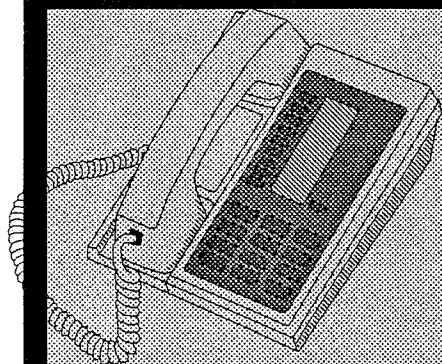
The Sept. 4 date is better than nothing but not the swiftest choice. That's Labor Day weekend and the show will go off the starting block against the premiere of *NFL Monday Night Football*, the number five show in all of TV during the 1994-95 season.

What also smacks of weakness in this show is Bischoff will attempt to play McMahon by inserting himself as host. While on a recent pay-per-view he outshone Schiavone, Bischoff is a long way from star-quality material. If he teams with Heenan, Bobby will extended to the point of overexposure because this will put him on four shows.

This show cries out for a fresh look in both format and announcers and belief from here is neither will occur. This may have been the time to try Terry Taylor, who's just been added to the WCW booking committee, as a younger, energetic mike man. Taylor has always been articulate and probably would need very little coaching to have the energy and inflection for a solid play-by-play commentator.

The only three people who appear to have the strength to give this show any hope of ratings power are Hulk Hogan, Sting and Vader. What are you going to do? Have the Hogan Challenge? Or rotate the three in the main events every week? We all know better than to see that happen. The Flair-Savage confrontations have resulted in lower ratings on Saturday night, so that does not appear to be the answer.

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The Wrestling Observer Hotline

**THE ONLY HOTLINE WITH SAME-NIGHT
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*Live Bash-at-the-Beach
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Spotlight To End As WWF Staple

NEW YORK—WWF Wrestling Spotlight, for more than nine years a staple of the Titan Sports syndication lineup, will cease production in the fall.

Spotlight, which is only carried by a handful of independent stations and satellite networks, has been little more than a recap show of matches from other WWF product. But the show reached a peak in 1988 when it aired on nearly 70 stations as a "C" show in the Titan staple.

In the process, WWF Wrestling Challenge, which has been relegated to weaker time periods as the company's "B" show, will revert to a magazine-style format in the fall with fewer new in-arena matches.

Bischoff Claims Syndie Victory

NEW YORK—Armed with data he cited from the Nielsen Pocketpiece ratings tabulation, World Championship Wrestling executive vice president Eric Bischoff claimed victory in syndication ratings on the NewSport network last Thursday.

On Chet Coppick's *NewSport Talk*, Bischoff claimed for the week ending June 11, WCW shows scored a cumulative (gross for all series combined) 6.8 rating to a 5.8 for WWF shows.

Bischoff also contended his series were on 194 stations, compared to 170 for the WWF. Titan sources are not commenting but privately dispute Bischoff's claims.

ECW To Get Atlanta Pitch

ATLANTA—Extreme Championship Wrestling is being pitched to Paramount-owned WVEU-TV for an Atlanta berth.

ECW would supplant the NWA/Deep South shows now airing at 3:30 a.m. Sundays. Atlanta would represent ECW's biggest broadcast market clearance.



MATWATCH '95 Editorial

THE BUCK STOPS AT TED

(This is reprinted from editor Steve Beverly's column in the June 30 edition of the Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Enquirer).

Forget *The Great American Bash*. Forget *King-of-the-Ring*. Too many of you have asked when I was going to tee off on a topic which raises my ire. Strap yourselves in because here we go.

At one point in time, Ted Turner was an idol of mine in the television business. Innovative. A maverick. A guy who would do the very thing people told him could not be done. No more.

Ted Turner is the master of doublespeak. Time after time, Turner takes the cause of excessive sexual and violent programming to Congress. His last visit to a House panel resulted in Turner testifying for a government clampdown on programming content, telling legislators to "ram it down the networks' throats." Of course, just two nights earlier, Turner's own "WCW Saturday Night" dramatized an attempted murder in which villains Vader and Sid Vicious had a bomb planted on the pleasure boat of Sting and Davey Boy Smith.

Ted can pontificate all he wants about the trash on network television. But the time has come for him and his newly-designated president of World Championship Wrestling, Harvey Schiller, to examine their own product.

For those of you who don't watch WCW (and increasingly fewer of you do), Kevin Sullivan is a Boston-born wrestler who, at 47, is well past his prime but plays office politics well enough to continue in moderately-prominent roles. For the bulk of the last decade, Sullivan has off-and-on trotted out an image as a Satan worshipper on various wrestling shows and exhibits extreme cases of the language and practices of Satanic cults.

Sullivan is at it again in a weekly series of vignettes depicting him visiting a Hades-like environment, answering to a chief akin to Lucifer (Curtis Lauke), and recruiting a corps of fellow Satanists (which will include John Tenta, the former Earthquake/Avalanche, Kimala and 7-2 newcomer Paul Wight). The segments are admittedly cartoon-like in production values but, nonetheless, project a message of Satanism. I've seen three of them and, frankly, hope any parent with a concern for children will turn off the set.

I wonder how many times Ted Turner even looks at one of these shows. I wonder if he does, does he consider Sullivan's segments responsible family television? Can Turner not watch a Sullivan vignette and honestly not see the ambiguity in his past public pronouncements on the state of television programming? Or would he merely shrug the WCW bits off as "just wrestling," as so many of his minions in the WCW office do?

Does Schiller (also president of TBS Sports), with a masterful reputation as the former commissioner of the Southeastern Conference and executive director of the U.S. Olympic Committee, look at wrestling characters promoting Satanism as a measure of credible programming for which he is proud?

No less than ex-NBC Entertainment president Brandon Tartikoff rues the day he scheduled a Geraldo Rivera special called "Satan's Underground." In Tartikoff's book, "The Last Great Ride," he says, "Disturbing reports began to trickle in about people inspired by the broadcast to copycat incidents contained in the special. I was appalled."

Bob DeMoss of Dr. James Dobson's "Focus on the Family" recently said, "You'd be surprised at how many fourth graders, even in Christian schools, can name their favorite slasher movie—many with Satanic overtones."

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Ratings Rap

Analysis

Unquestionably, the major story is the sharp tailspin in WCW *Saturday Night*. Not in the history of the *SuperStation* has the Saturday flagship show failed to draw at least a 2 rating during a one-month period.

Even when the show was untimely moved to a 7 p.m. slot in January 1989, the monthly average never dropped below a 2.2. In the November sweeps of 1988, the Dusty Rhodes-produced shows sank so badly in quality, the show only drew a 2.1 rating. The final month of Bill Watts' supervision in 1993 was at 2.1, where it stayed for Eric Bischoff for five consecutive months.

Tons of excuses are being offered, including the annual one of warm spring weather and increased cable competition. Nonsense. WCW is simply not giving viewers what they want to see and the Flair-Savage confrontations are included in that undesired umbrella.

While TBS is still seeing the 5 per cent share average as acceptable, the five-week period is the longest in TBS history that no *SuperStation* wrestling show has scored a 2 rating.

Likewise, aside from *Monday Night Raw*, no show—period—has been able to reach a 2 since before Memorial Day weekend.

For the second quarter, the 3.6 posted by *Raw* is the highest quarterly average since the 3.7 scored by both *WCW Main Event* and *World Championship Wrestling* in the first quarter of 1990 (when four of five cable shows hit a 3). So is the margin of victory over the 2.1 averaged by *Saturday Night*.

WCW is stuck now in that proverbial well which suggests we hope we can drag up the bucket and somehow find water. Nothing appears to be working and not even the occasional live telecast, which appears to be relegated to the Sundays of pay-per-view cablecasts, appears to power the numbers.

After millions of spending on talent, set refurbishing, graphics redesigns and Bischoff's passionate desire to remove Jim Ross from the air, the cable ratings are right where they were two years ago when he took over and two-tenths of a point lower in June than in 1993.

Viewers appear to be voting for one series as appointment TV for wrestling, namely *Raw*, which for 65 of 68 head-to-head weeks has clung to the top spot of the Nielsens but never more easily than in the most recent spring.

If the numbers are a barometer, Bischoff has had a longer period on lower numbers than any previous WCW executive and unless he is being judged by a different standard, the sand is moving ever faster through the hourglass.

Cable Wrestling Ratings

	April	May	June
Monday Night Raw	3.7/5.5	3.5/5.5	3.5/5.6
WCW Sat. Night	2.2/5.2	2.2/5.5	1.9/5.0
WCW Main Event	2.0/3.9	1.7/4.0	1.7/4.1
WWF Action Zone	1.8/5.4	1.8/5.5	1.8/5.5
WCW Pro Wrestling	1.6/6.2	1.5/5.9	1.2/4.7
WWF Mania	1.4/4.5	1.4/4.8	1.3/4.5

JUNE (Week-By-Week)

	3-5	10-12	17-19	24-26
Monday Night Raw	3.4/5.6	3.4/5.6	3.9/6.3	3.4/5.7
WWF Action Zone	1.9/5.8	1.8/5.5	1.7/5.2	1.8/5.6
WCW Saturday Night	1.8/4.8	1.9/4.8	1.9/5.2	1.8/5.0
WCW Main Event	1.6/3.8	1.7/4.2	1.8/4.5	1.7/4.2
WWF Mania	1.4/4.6	—	1.4/4.8	1.1/4.0
WCW Pro Wrestling	1.1/4.3	1.3/5.2	1.0/3.8	1.3/5.6

SECOND QUARTER RATINGS

	Rating/Share	Homes	1Q '95	Last Yr
RAW	3.6/5.6	2.29 m	3.1/4.5	3.2/4.8
SN	2.1/5.2	1.34 m	2.6/5.3	2.2/5.3
WME	1.8/4.2	1.15 m	1.9/3.7	1.7/3.9
AZ	1.8/5.4	1.14 m	1.8/5.3	1.7/5.4
PRO	1.4/5.6	882,000	1.7/6.2	1.5/6.0
MANIA	1.4/4.5	879,000	1.3/3.8	1.1/3.8

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Steve Beverly

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Do you develop this akin to the *Clash of the Champions* format which apparently bites the dust after seven years in August? If so, prepare for every other show on TBS to appear inferior, thus drawing lesser audiences.

Predictably, Bischoff claimed on *NewSport* last Thursday about *Head-to-Head*: "It's going to be very unique, different from what we're doing right now, or what anybody else is doing right now." Other than himself as host, this new series is more likely a work in progress. But like every new newsmagazine or talk show entering the TV fray, insinuations of uniqueness quickly deteriorate into looks of sameness to all the other available product. With so much riding on this show, you can picture before the premiere, how the new series will create lessening attention to the other TBS product.

No, this whole thing smacks of desperation from a 40-year-old Fred Silverman wannabe who either has to make this one work or admit all the spending and retooling since 1993 has only sporadically worked.

Our prediction: we'll eat our words gladly if incorrect....but look for this show to be either canceled or moved to the 10 p.m. slot by January. Bischoff will probably alibi that it needs a year to build but don't look for the same kind of patience as TBS has been forced to endure from Ted.

The executives at TNT really don't want this show or anything to do with wrestling and it's only there because of Ted Turner. After the premiere, expect the ratings to settle in between a 1 and a 1.5. Is McMahon worried? I doubt he'll be taking any Sleep-Eze to overcome a restless night over this one. I'd suggest mailing a complimentary bottle of Maalox to Bischoff. He'll need it.

Editorial

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Sheriff David Woolfork in my own home county has told several groups the most disturbing increase in youth-related crimes he faces are those connected with Satanic worship, particularly in rural areas.

Kevin Sullivan may be but a speck in the sand dune of television but, if you ask me, Satanism is one facet in the world of wrestling villains which ought to be eliminated by the people who have the power to do it. Sullivan should be eliminated with it because, if you ask me, anyone who has portrayed devil worship—even on something as frivolous as TV pro wrestling—as frequently as Kevin, either has an affinity for the subject or no grasp of responsibility.

The next time Harvey Schiller is mentioned as one of the nation's top sports executives, ask yourself whether Schiller is aware a TV wrestling hour on his watch is depicting Satanism.

Moreover, the next time Ted Turner proclaims the family virtues of his SuperStation and tells a Congressional subcommittee to clean up television, ask yourself if Turner has taken a bottle of Mr. Clean to the oldest program on the entire TBS cable network, namely his Saturday night wrestling. Mr. Turner, you have the power to do it; otherwise, your words in Washington are as hollow as a hole in a rotten tree.

Bischoff: "WE HAVE A VERY HAPPY FAMILY"

NEW YORK—Proclaiming that looking at the World Wrestling Federation as competition was "a short-sighted goal," WCW executive vice president Eric Bischoff projected a superior confidence on Chet Coppick's *NewSport Talk* last Thursday night.

Bischoff, guesting only two weeks after the most recent appearance by Titan Sports chief Vince McMahon, told Coppick: "I think we're looking a lot beyond the WWF. That's really a short-sighted goal to only be worried about our competition in the U.S."

But Bischoff denied attempting to raid the WWF of former or existing talent, such as Randy Savage, Jim Duggan, Hulk Hogan, Gene Okerlund or Bobby Heenan. "My goals are big. My vision is big," said Bischoff. "I wanted the best there was. I didn't raid them. They came looking for me."

On Vince McMahon, Bischoff contended: "I don't think he's quite as competitive now as he used to be. Do I look on him as a threat to WCW? Absolutely not."

Bischoff insisted WCW has a "very strict testing policy" for drugs and claimed "we're looking all the time to be sure it's as strict as it can be and be within guidelines concerning privacy laws."

Further proclaiming WCW has overtaken Titan in syndication (see *Headlines*, page 6), Bischoff said the cable race is "not so much challenging. I've got a show on Saturday morning and they've got a show on Saturday morning and we outperform them on a pretty consistent basis." (Bischoff failed to acknowledge the sharp decline in numbers for *WCW Saturday Night*).

When Coppick asked what Bischoff's reaction would be if McMahon ever proposed a joint pay-per-view event, Bischoff said: "No thank you. We're having a lot of fun. We're growing. We have a very happy family."

Bischoff cited a 70 per cent increase in pay-per-view revenues (though not likewise citing increased marketing expenses and the decline to an 0.66 buy-rate for the *Slamboree* show with Hulk Hogan).

While saying he frequently consulted with booker Ric Flair and lead heel Vader (whom Bischoff called by his previous Japan-licensed name Big Van Vader), Bischoff made clear he relied more on Hogan and Randy Savage. "Do I rely on them a lot?" said Bischoff. "You bet I do. Do I trust them? I absolutely do."

**MATWATCH '95
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